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Rhode Island Library Association Bulletin

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April 1993

If This Is November, It Must be Russia

BY KATHLEEN FOULKE

On November 28, 1992, a group of librarians from all over the United States departed for a pre-holiday visit to Russia and Poland. The purpose of their trip, sponsored by People to People International, was to establish face to face contact with other librarians and thus encourage international understanding and good will.

As American libraries talk about the virtual library and our fast growing capability to extend library services far beyond library walls, Russian and Polish librarians struggle to come to terms with 1) the idea of open and easy access for all, and 2) the ways and means of providing this access.

Kathy Foulke has written a moving and personal account of her encounter with and impressions of these two cultures in the midst of sweeping transitions.

Information Power, adopted by ALA's American Association of School Librarians (AASL), and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT), as the 90's watch word for children's librarians, refers to the ways in which librarians help kids (and adults!) develop into independent information seekers. *Information Power* establishes guidelines for school library media specialists that reflect the values of the library profession as a whole, applied to the particular circumstances of schools. As I reflect on my recent trip to Russia and Poland, I think the words *Information Power* were well chosen, for what we saw seemed to be a first-hand demonstration of the actual and potential power of information.

Our group, one of two traveling in tandem, was led by ALA President Marilyn Miller. The impetus for the trip was the interest of Russian and Polish librarians who work with children and young adults, in gaining a better understanding of current library practice in the United States. The majority of the Miller delegation were school library media specialists, representing a range of school situations and grade levels. Several were district coordinators or involved in the education of librarians.

In 15 days we visited 18 sites in St. Petersburg, Moscow and Warsaw. Our itinerary included the national libraries of Russia and Poland, the Public Library of Warsaw, State Library for Children, in

Moscow, Palaces of Youth (centers for afterschool activities which include libraries for young people), the Russian Ministry of Education, Institutes of Professional Education and Institutes of Culture (where many Russian librarians receive their education), Warsaw University (where many Polish librarians are educated), and school libraries in Moscow and Warsaw.

It's difficult to summarize so many experiences, but this very personal set of perceptions of what we saw and heard seem to organize themselves around two common themes.

The first theme is that history is very much present in both countries, and libraries have played an important role in safeguarding cultural continuity and identity through many years of changes. After the surprise of seeing (despite the Communist era) how many 18th and 19th century buildings there are in Moscow, and the awesome reconstruction involved in getting St. Petersburg and Warsaw restored to some approximation of their pre-World War II state, we were prepared to recognize and appreciate a spirit that also lovingly protects its community memory in the form of library collections. Many libraries survive or have been re-established through determined, even heroic efforts of librarians and ordinary citizens. Polish librarians seemed to identify the survival of the sense of national identity with the creation and restoration of library and educational institutions

(which only date from post-World War I - they were not permitted to exist during imperial Russian rule.) That Russian and Polish librarians regard what they oversee as cultural treasure is apparent from the love and pride with which they display their holdings. It didn't seem to matter whether the item at hand was a Gutenberg Bible or a dog-eared classic in a school library. One school librarian talked of the importance of "one heart speaking to another heart," which was her metaphor for the relationship of author to reader, or librarian to the needs of patron. High value is put on the collective information base represented by library collections, and high value is put on the literacy which enables access.

The second theme is that there is commitment to change that incorporates current technology, but (affordability aside) also fear about the consequences of increased technology, and uncertainty about the process. Information technology isn't much in evidence in any of the libraries we visited (though Warsaw University is on the Internet). Economic problems in both countries make catching up in the area of computer technology a daunting project; some of our Russian colleagues did observe that they stood to benefit from our mistakes, through participating in a mature technology. Most of those we spoke to are interested, and foresee being "on-line" in the future; we heard of, but did not see, computers in schools. There was resonance when we talked about how immediately comfortable children are with computers (we were told that some have them at home), but some librarians expressed concern that technology would be a barrier to the "heart to heart" contact present in their current non-automated situations. We heard fears expressed that computer use might bring about some of the negative effects they see in children who watch television a lot.

Need for change in the system was expressed in theoretical terms, but we could see little in practice that was substantive. In school and other libraries we visited, access is still controlled and mediated by librarians. Independent use of the library is not encouraged and requires more expertise on the part of the patron than in United States' libraries. In Russia there are often limitations on "readership" in national libraries. Those who are allowed to use the libraries must be registered, and in the past, this registration was based on the need-to-know and ideological grounds. (These restrictions have been and are being gradually diminished.) In St. Petersburg the "public" library - really a second national library - generally takes three hours to locate books for patrons (in the closed stacks) if the book is in the same building. If not, the lapsed time may be a day or more. Most libraries have multiple access catalogs and multiple classification systems (within the same library).

The books on the shelves in libraries that are not closed stack have no call numbers on the spine, making precise location of the materials, without physically removing them and checking inside the book, difficult. Russian school librarians pre-select books for a given group of readers and encourage borrowing only from this pre-selected group. Young readers are not encouraged to browse the shelves.

Many of the librarians we talked to seemed insecure about modes that involve independence and initiative on the part of individuals accustomed to centralized, top-down systems. They point to their complex classification schemes and abstruse shelving systems as an intrinsic part of the way they "do business," but a certain orientation toward library use seemed to be at work too. We came away feeling that the need was for models. The willingness was there, but the question is: How do we do it?

Late 20th century technologies have played a key role in bringing about historic changes. Despite the current economic difficulties in both countries, and concerns about what the future will bring, no one we spoke to would reverse the forward momentum. We saw and heard much that indicated Russians and Poles value their access to international news through world television networks and other information sources, that they are well-informed about events inside and outside their nations, and that there's an overall orientation to information as a liberating force. The pushes and pulls are many, but everyone we asked expressed the determination to not go back to repressive regimes, even given the lure of better order and more personal security. I came away feeling that libraries will continue to play a key role in the forward momentum.

Kathy Foulke is Librarian at the Gordon School, East Providence.

True to Minerva

BY JAMES L. WHEATON

Editor's note: This piece was excerpted from Jim Wheaton's address at the celebration of the 90th anniversary of the Deborah Cook Sayles Memorial Library building in Pawtucket. We are grateful to the author and to the Pawtucket Public Library for the opportunity to share it with you.

The Pawtucket Public Library is the child of the Pawtucket Library Association organized in 1852 by the Pawtucket Debating Society. But, this was a private library with few subscribers. Recognizing a need to change, the society offered their resources to the town and the town quickly accepted. In Pawtucket, during 1876, the doors were opened to the first free public library in the state of Rhode Island.

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* Indexing Coverage from July 1982.
Abstracting Coverage from June 1990.



Three months prior to the transfer of the library to the town, Minerva Sanders had been elected as librarian. Minerva was retained as librarian of the new free public library. The choice was immensely fortunate for the people of Pawtucket. No one could have foreseen the remarkable development of the library during her long tenure, which lasted from 1876 until 1910. Neither could anyone have predicted the future importance of the library, not only locally, but beyond the town and the state.

Minerva was a woman of vision. She believed that a library should be a center of culture, as necessary as a school or a church. She believed the library was the mill workers' long-sought-after highway to learning. She felt a library should be bright and cheerful, and the staff must provide friendly, courteous attention for the patrons. Most importantly, the library should contain books to meet the special needs of the community.

In 1887, Minerva astounded the nation with her now-classic paper presented to the American Library Association. The title was "The Possibilities of Public Libraries in Manufacturing Communities." This sounds like a rather dull subject, but it was revolutionary. In it, Minerva shared her ten years of experience adapting the library to local conditions. Her novel idea was a library with an open shelf system. She showed that mill workers were confused by the card catalog. She noted that direct contact with the books was a valuable education in itself. The people could browse and see other books of related interest, and they found that the pieces of their problems fit together right there in the stacks. The theft and vandalism expected by most never materialized, and Minerva pronounced her experiment a resounding success. The system of open shelving in libraries quickly spread across the nation.

Minerva again broke with tradition. She was the first to open the library to children of all ages. Previously, no children under the age of fourteen were allowed into libraries. In many cases, the age was sixteen or eighteen. Minerva revealed her experiences in another paper presented before the American Library Association in 1902. That paper was titled "Report on Reading for the Young." Minerva believed that little ones could benefit from the library perhaps even more than adults.

Minerva Sanders' success and the need of the community services prompted philanthropist and industrialist Frederick Clark Sayles, the first mayor of Pawtucket, to give the land and money for the construction of a new library. It was to be a memorial to his wife, Deborah Cook Sayles, who had died in 1895.

Sayles was not satisfied to give just land and money. He directed the process as well. He immediately assembled a committee of experts to determine needs and requirements. True to Minerva Sanders, they recommended an open-shelf library with room for 50,000 to 70,000 volumes.

Frederick Clark Sayles still was not finished. He left for Europe and traveled the continent studying library architecture. On his return, twenty-four contractors placed bids for the construction contract. The company of Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson of Boston won it with plans for a Greek Revival granite structure fronted by a portico of four Ionic columns. When you look at the main entrance to the library today, you will see an exact copy of the doorway to the Erechtheum on the Acropolis in Athens.

Again true to Minerva, there was a children's reading room just to the right of the front entrance. As a child, this writer was awestruck by stacks with open stairs to the second levels with glass floors, creating that all-important bright and cheery atmosphere.

Minerva Sanders demanded a library designed for service to the community. True to her, the Pawtucket Public Library was the first free public library in Rhode Island, the first in the nation to institute the open shelf system, the first in the nation to admit children of all ages, the first to open reading rooms on Sundays, the first to provide a children's story hour, the first to provide a full-time high school librarian and one of the earliest to provide bookmobile service. This library has always been connected with the growth and personality of the community. With the current buildings, and still true to Minerva, the Pawtucket Public Library is prepared to serve the community far into the 21st century.

James L. Wheaton, a native of Pawtucket and currently in research at the URI Graduate School of Oceanography, is a retiree of the U.S.D.A. and with Elizabeth J. Johnson, has developed Spaulding House Publications and the Spaulding House Research Library, with preservation of Pawtucket history and genealogy as their purpose.

BULLETIN BOARD

The Providence Public Library's 5th Annual Rhode Island Authors Reception has been scheduled for Sunday, April 25, 1993 from 3 - 6 P.M., featuring guest author, Doris Kearns Goodwin, most noted for her brilliantly acclaimed works, *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys* and *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream*.

The reception welcomes all Rhode Island authors and this year will especially acknowledge those authors who have commercially published books with a 1992 copyright date. Master of Ceremonies will be Don Wilmeth, Professor of Theater and English at Brown University, Curator of the Smith Collection of Conjuring Books and Magicana and member of the Library's Corporation.

A bookfair, sponsored by Borders Book Shop, Cranston will be incorporated into the afternoon, offering a chance to purchase the titles with a 1992 copyright date as well as those of Doris Kearns Goodwin. The honored authors will be available for autographs at the bookfair!

All Rhode Island authors, their families, friends and guests are encouraged to attend this free and open to the public afternoon event to be held at the Central Library, 225 Washington Street, Providence.



The RISD Library received a \$100,000 Champlin Foundations grant, along with a contribution from the school, in support of the first phase of the Library's recon and automation project. The Library hopes to have its integrated online public access catalog and circulation system in place by Fall '93. Automating the collections will represent an important step toward making RISD's holdings accessible to a statewide network.



Johnson and Wales University has finalized plans to relocate its library to the former headquarters of WJAR TV, known as Broadcast House, on Dorrance Street in downtown Providence. Renovation of the facility will take place starting this Spring and extend well into the Fall. The result will be a spacious modern library and an expanded staff.



The Brendel Memorial Fund at Brown University Library has been used to acquire the 1990 United Nations Collection from Readex Microprint Corporation. The fund was established in honor of Alice Brendel ('67), librarian at Brown University from 1982-1991 and Government Documents Coordinator from 1990-1991. This purchase will provide comprehensive coverage of United Nations official publications for 1990, adding more than 2,600 microfiche to the collection. It will greatly enhance the U.N. and international documents collections at Brown, collections which Alice was instrumental in acquiring and developing.



In November Roger Williams University connected to NEARnet, the regional branch of the worldwide INTERNET. The costs for the initial connection and the first three years of operation will be funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation.

Pulitzer Prize Winner Galway Kinnell will be guest poet at the Fourth Annual William L. Bergeron Memorial Poetry Program on Sunday, April 25, at 6 p.m. at the Cranston Public Library, 140 Sockanosset Cross Road. Mr. Kinnell is Poet Laureate of Vermont and is Samuel F.B. Morse Professor at New York University.

Prior to his appearance at the Cranston Public Library, Professor Kinnell will be reading from his work and delivering a short talk on influences in his poetry at the Galway Kinnell Poetry Prize Program sponsored by the Pawtucket Arts Council with partial funding from the Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities. The 2 o'clock program will be held at the Pawtucket Congregational Church. Both programs are free and open to the public.



♥ Take this opportunity to introduce yourself to your legislators. They will be receiving a personal invitation at their State House offices. Send them a note in advance reminding them of the affair, and mentioning that you will be attending and look forward to meeting them and having your picture taken for the local paper. This is an informal reception, with no keynote speaker. Drop in any time between three o'clock and six o'clock to show your support of libraries and receive a *Library Lover* pin included with your donation of \$5.00.

Government Relations Committee
Rhode Island Library Association

PEOPLE

MELODY ALLEN, Supervisor of Young Readers' Services at the Department of State Library Services, received the 1993 Literacy Award presented by the Rhode Island State Council of the International Reading Association for exemplary service in the promotion of literacy.

MARILYN D. CURTIS has been promoted to Head, Public Services at the Redwood Library and Athenaeum.

CAROL DiPRETE, Roger Williams University Library Director, was awarded Alumni of the Year 1992 by her alma mater, the University of Maryland.

PAUL DRAKE, Serials and ILL Librarian at Roger Williams University, recently returned from sabbatical during which he developed a core collection bibliography of paralegal materials.

CHARLENE ERTL has joined the staff of the Pawtucket Public Library as a children's librarian. Charlene is a recent graduate of the University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Library and Information Studies.

MEI-YUN ANNIE LIN recently was appointed Curator of the East Asian Collection at Brown University.

HELENA RODRIGUES, Bibliographic Control Librarian at Roger Williams University, delivered a paper entitled "End User Satisfaction: A Comparison of Three Catalog Environments" at the Fifth Annual New Information technologies Conference held in Hong Kong in December.

RAYMOND TELLIER is the new Head Librarian at the Pascoag Public Library.

CALENDAR

APRIL 18-24: National Library Week

APRIL 20: ALA Legislative Day, Washington, D.C.

APRIL 21: Young Adult Round Table, "Oral History," South Kingstown High School, 9 a.m.

APRIL 26: Library Board of RI, North Smithfield PL, 4-6 p.m.

MAY 4: RILA Executive Board, DSLS, 2 p.m.

MAY 24: Library Board of RI, Cross' Mills PL, 4-6 p.m.

JUNE 1: RILA Executive Board, Brown University Sciences Library, 2 p.m.

JUNE 10-11: RILA Annual Conference

JUNE 24-JULY 1: ALA Annual Conference, New Orleans

The Second NELINET Reference Technology Advisory Committee Meeting

Hogan Campus Center, College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA

April 29, 1993 9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

9:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. Registration

9:30 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. Keynote Address

10:30 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. Morning Breakout Sessions

12:15 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. Lunch

1:45 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. Afternoon Breakout Sessions

Keynote Address:

*Information Highways and the Virtual Library:
Access, Excess, Success*

Laura Breeden, Executive Director, FARNET

Breakout Sessions:

- A. Access vs. Ownership:
New Paradigms for Librarians and Users
- B. Getting to the Virtual Library
- C. Internet Services and Access

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Please check your choice for Lunch:

____ Stuffed Chicken Breast

____ Vegetarian Lasagna

Method of payment:

____ Check Enclosed

____ Debit NELINET Account

(To debit your NELINET account, this form must be
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Temporary/Part-Time Librarians

During 1989, the *Bulletin* established a "hotline" which matched those Librarians interested in part-time or temporary assignments in libraries with those libraries in need of such skilled help.

We have discovered that there is a definite need for such a "hotline," and have received numerous inquiries, both from applicants and employers. Therefore, we are asking all those interested in registering with the "hotline" to fill out the following form. In order to update our files, we are asking everyone to register, even if you may have used this service previously.

All librarians interested in having their names referred to those needing part-time/temporary employees should complete the form below and send it to:

Pam Stoddard
Government Publications Office
University of Rhode Island Library
Kingston, Rhode Island 02881

When filling out the form be as specific or broad as fits your need. Pam will contact individuals if she is unclear about your statement. If you have any questions please call her at 792-2606. Feel free to include a resume, but be sure to complete this form.

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Telephone: _____

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Institution (i.e. academic, public, school, special, etc.)

Dates:

Areas of Experience

(Reference, Circulation, Children's Services, Acquisitions, Cataloging, etc.)

Areas of Expertise

(Certifications, language fluency, knowledge of automated systems, storytelling, etc.)

Volunteer Positions Available

1) The Rhode Island Library Association Membership Committee needs one more enthusiastic and energetic volunteer to be in charge of recruiting and recording Institutional Memberships. Interested persons should contact Kathy Ellen Bullard, Membership Committee Chair, at Woonsocket-Harris Public Library, 769-9044, as soon as possible.

2) The Rhode Island Library Association is seeking a moderator for an electronic bulletin board to be established for RILA issues on the Library of Rhode Island. The moderator would have to check the electronic bulletin board periodically to review and summarize discussions, to ensure that questions are answered, and to keep discussions focused on RILA issues. Interested applicants need not be computer "Techies," but should display an avid interest in accessing the Library of Rhode Island (in general) and the RILA Bulletin Board (in particular). Do **you** like playing with electronic bulletin boards? Then contact RILA President, Janet A. Levesque, at the Cumberland Public Library, 1464 Diamond Hill Road, Cumberland, RI 02864, or phone 333-2552, or FAX 334-0578, or contact me by CLAN e-mail.

3) The Public Library Association of ALA is seeking a representative from the Rhode Island Library Association to join "PLAN," a group of representatives from state chapters of ALA who are interested in public library activities. The group meets twice a year, at the ALA Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference, to share information about effective programming ideas, to discuss what PLA can offer to state and local organizations, and to bring this information back to the chapters. There are no obligations other than being an effective conduit of information. However, candidates should be a member of both ALA and PLA, as well as RILA. Interested applicants should contact Janet A. Levesque, RILA President, at the Cumberland Public Library, 1464 Diamond Hill Road, Cumberland, RI 02864, or phone 333-2552. (FAX 334-0578.)

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